
215.70

Nutrition and Health Assessment

Overview

Introduction

Nutrition assessment is the first step in quality nutrition services — it provides the necessary information that shapes how and what nutrition services are provided. This assessment ensures that all applicants are assessed in a consistent and equitable manner. More importantly, it results in the provision of individualized nutrition services relevant to the participant's needs and interests.

Data collected in WIC clinics includes:

- Nutrition practices,
- Anthropometric measurements (weight and length/height),
- Blood tests (hemoglobin or hematocrit),
- Current and past medical conditions,
- Oral health,
- Lifestyle,
- Social Environment,
- Immunization status, and
- Access to ongoing health care.

A quality WIC nutrition assessment is the process of obtaining and synthesizing relevant and accurate information in order to:

- Assess an applicant's nutrition status and risk;
- Design appropriate nutrition education and counseling;
- Tailor the food package to address nutrition needs; and
- Make appropriate referrals.

Policy

Nutrition and health interview questions are completed in the state data system at each certification visit using the standard questionnaires developed by the state WIC office. Often the CPA will ask more questions to clarify or collect information to help sort out relevant issues. The WIC Competent Professional Authority (CPA) sifts through all of the assessment information to look for connections between behaviors, health conditions and risks. These sifting, sorting and prioritizing steps are critical thinking skills.

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Overview, Continued

Purpose of nutrition interviews	<p>Nutrition interviews are completed for many reasons including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify behaviors affecting food intake and nutritional status, • Evaluate typical eating patterns, • Assess whether the diet is age-appropriate, • Identify parental/participant concerns about nutrition feeding, • Assess nutrition education needs so that timely and appropriate anticipatory guidance can be provided, • Determine adequacy of food resources, • Identify intake of potentially dangerous non-food substances and dangerous foods (such as alcohol or foods commonly associated with choking), • Establish nutrition risk and eligibility for WIC services, and • Assess need for referrals to other health care providers, nutrition programs, and other assistance programs.
Purpose of health interviews	<p>Health interviews are completed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine medical nutrition risks for participants, • Determine access to health care, • Identify health education needs, and • Make appropriate referrals.
Sources of data	<p>For most participants, health data is collected at the WIC clinic. However, the participant's health care provider may also provide health data (see Policy 215.63).</p>
The Participatory Approach during the Interview	<p>It is the face-to-face interaction between clinic staff and participants that builds rapport. When you establish a trusting relationship, questions and feedback flow in both directions, resulting in a value enhanced nutrition assessment.</p> <p>A warm, friendly environment communicates that participants are welcome. This helps build a sense of trust and fosters good rapport with the participant who is being asked to provide personal information.</p> <p>Planning the most effective services for a participant means interacting with participants and parents to understand their interests, needs, concerns, and potential barriers to behavior change. Tips for actively involving the participant or parent in the assessment process and improving the quality of the information obtained in interviews include the following:</p>

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The Participatory Approach, Continued

- **Introduce yourself.** Explain what is going to happen during the time you spend with the applicant.
- **Communicate a non-judgmental and interested attitude.** Give your undivided attention to the applicant. Do not criticize or prematurely express your opinions.
- **Listen.** Pay close attention to detail, storing information mentally for later evaluation. Do not assume anything until the applicant tells you it is so.
- **Use open-ended questions when you can.** Limit the use of directive or closed questions (questions that can be answered yes or no) when possible.
- **Elicit the applicant's concerns, hopes, and expectations.** Determine if any fears or concerns exist and identify how the applicant thinks you can help.
- **Be aware of nonverbal communication.** Note facial expressions, body language, posture, and signs of emotions. Observe the interaction between a mother and her children.
- **Acknowledge that you understand.** Let the applicant know you have understood and accepted the information shared before offering any specific advice.
- **Don't let hostility be a communication barrier.** Bring it to the open. Ask, "You seem to be angry with me, can you tell me why?" When you feel yourself becoming angry, ask yourself, "Why?"
- **Separate the interview and data collection from education and counseling.** Collect all of the information first so you have the whole picture to review. It is confusing to applicants to switch roles from providing information to receiving information. However, if an applicant asks for information, it is acceptable to answer the questions. A brief answer may be best, with assurance the further discussion will come when you have completed collecting information.

Policy reference

Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment in WIC: The First Step In Quality Nutrition Services, USDA/FNS, 2006.

Health Interview Procedure

Overview It is strongly recommended that all pertinent health interview questions are asked of each applicant. However, the RN, LPN, or CPA can exercise professional discretion about which questions to ask based on the applicant's overall risk profile.

Who can complete health interviews? LPNs and any health professional that can function as a competent professional authority (CPA) can complete health interview questionnaires (see Policy 310.08).

Procedure The table below summarizes the procedure for completing the health interview questionnaires in the data system.

Step	Action
1	Ask the health interview questions relevant to the applicant's categorical status.
2	Ask additional follow-up or probing questions to clarify responses, collect more information, or determine if a risk is applicable.
3	Assign any risk codes supported by responses to the questions. <u>Note:</u> LPNs may record responses on the health interview questionnaires but cannot manually assign risk codes.

Nutrition Practices Procedure

Policy

It is strongly recommended that all pertinent Nutrition Practices questions are asked of each applicant. However, the CPA should exercise professional discretion about which questions to ask based on the following:

- The applicant's risk profile (i.e. presence of a medical nutrition risk);
 - Relevance of each question to the applicant's age, developmental status and/or categorical status; and
 - Previous response(s) to the same question.
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Who can complete the Nutrition Practices panel?

Any health professional that can function as a competent professional authority (CPA) can complete the Nutrition Practices panel (see Policy 310.08).

Note: The Iowa WIC program strongly encourages local agencies to employ licensed dietitians to provide this service.

Procedure

The table below provides guidance for CPAs.

If the applicant has...	Then ...
At least one medical nutrition risk	Ask selected nutrition questions that may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information or insight about the medical risk, • Address any concerns identified by the parent/guardian/applicant, • Determine nutrition education needs, • Assist in food package design, and • Identify potential referral needs.
No medical nutrition risks	Ask all nutrition questions appropriate for the child's age and developmental status or the woman's categorical status to determine whether any dietary risks exist.

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Nutrition Practices Procedure, Continued

Using the nutrition practices questions in the data system

The key is to engage the client in a dialog and let the conversation flow where it needs to go without trying to force it down a structured interrogation path. The

questions that appear in the data system provide structure and a starting point for completing the nutrition practices questions, however CPAs are encouraged to:

- Rephrase questions to fit their interviewing style or to improve the applicant's understanding; and
- Ask additional follow-up or probing questions to clarify responses, collect more information, or to determine if a risk is applicable.
- Utilize the starters and prompts that are found at the bottom of each section in the participant's nutrition interview.

Note: CPAs are cautioned against asking all of the questions as closed questions or rephrasing questions in such a way as to result in leading questions (i.e. the applicant can perceive the "right" or "acceptable" answer to the question.)

Assigning risks

All relevant nutrition risks should be identified at each certification. If the data system automatically assigns risks, the CPA must also manually assign other relevant risks. This comprehensive assessment is important for determining how and what nutrition services to provide.

If no medical or dietary risks are identified after completing a comprehensive assessment, assign risk 401 for children ≥ 24 months and all women.

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